



[Back to normal view](#)

ARE THEY DOING WHAT THEY SAID THEY WOULD DO?

New web map shows how countries are reducing environmental hazards for children

Note for the press EURO/19/05

Copenhagen, Edinburgh, 20 October 2005

A new web map, being launched today, will allow countries to post information on what they are doing to reduce environmental hazards that affect human health, particularly that of children. The launch takes place as 42 representatives of Member States in the European Region of the World Health Organization (WHO) gather in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, for the second meeting of the Task Force on the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE). The web map will make it easier to chart progress on commitments made in June 2004 at the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, in the Budapest Declaration and CEHAPE.

The web map offers information on a country-by-country basis on the web site of the European Environment and Health Committee. The content comes directly from countries, offering new access to policy-makers across the European Region. It will be built up gradually, focusing particularly on implementation of the four Regional Priority Goals on water and sanitation, accidents and injuries, air quality, and chemicals and other physical agents.

The WHO Special Programme on Health and Environment devised the map to encourage ministries of health and of the environment across Europe to communicate with the public on what they are doing to fulfil their promises about children, and to update the public on how they are going about it. A total of 37 countries are already revising their national environment and health action plans specifically to include children, and 11 of these will be finalized by the end of the year. Children are vulnerable to environmental threats, and this policy-making will ensure better protection.

At the meeting in Edinburgh, the Task Force will be looking particularly at progress made in tackling children's exposure to chemicals and other physical agents such as noise and radiation. The Task Force is chaired by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management.

The web map can be found at www.euro.who.int/eehc/ctryinfo/ctryinfo.

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Press materials can be found on the Regional Office web site (<http://www.euro.who.int/mediacentre>).

[Back to normal view](#)

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